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Relación entre la imagen del destino, experiencias turísticas memorables y la intención de retorno: Caso Pueblo Mágico de Cholula, Puebla

The Relationship Between Destination Image, Memorable Tourist Experiences, and re-visit Intention: The Case of the Magic Town of Cholula, Puebla

Relação entre imagem de destino, experiências turísticas memoráveis e intenção de retorno: O caso do Pueblo Mágico de Cholula, Puebla

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Resumen

El presente estudio se enmarca en la línea de investigación que analiza la influencia de la imagen del destino y las Experiencias Turísticas Memorables (ETM) en la intención de retorno de los turistas nacionales en México. Se centra en el caso del Pueblo Mágico de Cholula, Puebla, y emplea un modelo de correlación de Pearson para examinar la relación entre las variables. Los resultados revelan que tanto la imagen del destino como las Experiencias Turísticas Memorables ETM inciden significativamente en la decisión de los turistas de regresar a este sitio, reconocido por su riqueza cultural e histórica. La evidencia empírica muestra una alta significancia estadística en las correlaciones observadas, lo que permite identificar los factores clave que motivan el retorno a este destino turístico.

Palabras Clave: Experiencias turísticas memorables, imagen del destino, intención de retorno, Pueblo Mágico de Cholula.

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of destination image and memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) on the revisit intentions of domestic tourists in Mexico. Focusing on Cholula, Puebla—a city renowned for its cultural and historical heritage—this research employs a Pearson correlation model to analyze the relationships among the variables. The findings reveal that both destination image and MTEs significantly influence tourists' decisions to return to the destination. Statistically significant correlations provide evidence of the key factors motivating tourists to revisit this location.

Keywords: Memorable tourist experiences, destination image, revisit intentions, Magical Town of Cholula.



Resumo

Este estudo faz parte de uma linha de pesquisa que analisa a influência da imagem do destino e das Experiências Turísticas Memoráveis (ETM) na intenção de retorno de turistas nacionais no México. O estudo se concentra no caso do Pueblo Mágico de Cholula, Puebla, e utiliza um modelo de correlação de Pearson para examinar a relação entre as variáveis. Os resultados revelam que tanto a imagem do destino quanto as ETM influenciam significativamente a decisão dos turistas de retornar a este local, reconhecido por sua riqueza cultural e histórica. Evidências empíricas demonstram alta significância estatística nas correlações observadas, o que nos permite identificar os principais fatores que motivam o retorno a este destino turístico.

Palavras-chave: Experiências turísticas memoráveis, imagem do destino, intenção de retorno, Pueblo Mágico de Cholula.

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Introduction

Tourism has undergone significant evolution in recent decades, emerging as a critical driver of economic and social development across various regions. Within this context, the image projected by a tourist destination plays a pivotal role in shaping visitor perceptions and satisfaction, directly influencing the creation of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). These experiences are vital, as they not only foster tourists' emotional and cognitive connections with the destination but also influence their intentions to revisit.

Cholula, designated as a Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town), is renowned for its rich cultural, historical, and culinary heritage, which collectively forge a distinctive tourism identity. Understanding the interplay among destination image, MTEs, and revisit intentions enables the development of strategies to enhance the destination's sustainability and competitiveness. Effective management of the tourism image thus serves as a cornerstone for attracting and retaining visitors, promoting tourism rooted in authenticity and visitor satisfaction.

This study aims to examine the interconnections among destination image, MTEs, and revisit intentions in the context of Cholula. Through this analysis, it seeks to contribute to the formulation of more effective tourism strategies to bolster visitor attraction and loyalty, ensuring sustainable and competitive tourism development for the Pueblo Mágico of Cholula.



The research is structured as follows: it begins with a literature review, followed by an overview of the methodological approach and its application; subsequently, the findings and discussion are presented, culminating in conclusions and references. The literature review highlights key theoretical perspectives, provides conceptual and operational definitions of the factors, explores their correlations, and underscores their significance within the context of national tourism.

Literature review

The image projected by a tourist destination significantly shapes visitors' perceptions and satisfaction levels, directly influencing the creation of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). These experiences, in turn, substantially affect tourists' revisit intentions by strengthening their emotional and cognitive connections with the destination.

Within this context, Cholula, designated as a Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town), stands out for its distinctive cultural, historical, and gastronomic heritage, which collectively contribute to a unique tourism identity. A comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay among destination image, MTEs, and revisit intentions enables the development and implementation of effective strategies to enhance the destination's sustainability and competitiveness. This approach fosters a tourism model grounded in authenticity and visitor satisfaction, which are essential pillars for long-term tourism development. Such insights can, in the medium term, inform strategies to solidify Cholula's position as a Pueblo Mágico.

Memorable Tourist Experience (ETM)

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) involve the personal assessment of the tourist experience (Kim Jong-Hyeong & Bryan, 2012). This experience relates to visitors' memories, especially the emotions and feelings experienced during a tourist activity (Lee Y.-J. , 2015). Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) tend to primarily highlight positive experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Since both the experience and the memory-making process are essential to MTE (Coelho, 2017), not all tourist experiences are memorable.

Other authors have approached the topic of Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) as a complex phenomenon, highlighting the presence of multiple inherent dimensions. Qualitative studies explore different categories within the MTE, while scales and theoretical



models follow similar paths. Pioneers in this field, (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), conducted a qualitative study in which they proposed four dimensions of memorable trips:

1. Affect: positive emotions such as happiness and excitement, which are essential components.
2. Expectations: These involve unexpected events or surprises for tourists.
3. Consequentiality : perceived outcomes of the trip, such as strengthening social relationships, intellectual development, or self-discovery.
4. Memory: includes the memories, photographs and stories that remain from the trip.

In the study by (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), affect and expectations are part of the psychological dimension of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), memory is linked to the memorability of the experience, and consequentiality is understood as one of the results of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE).

They (Ballantyne, Packer, & Sutherland, 2011) identified four processes based on what visitors saw and heard, what they felt, thought, and did about it. In this analysis, the authors also focused on the psychological dimension of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), but included behavioral response as an outcome.

From a quantitative approach, some studies are based on the four domains of experience established by (Pine II & Gilmore, 2011), assuming that ETM is based on aspects such as entertainment, escapism, aesthetics and education (e.g., (Manthiou, Kang, Chiang, & Tang, 2015); (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007); (Pezzi & Vianna, 2015); (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang, & Reisinger, 2015). In addition, (Kim, Brent Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012) they developed a widely used scale, composed of 24 items and seven dimensions, based on previous studies by (Kim J. H., 2010). Similarly, (Kim & Ritchie, 2014) they conducted a study where they evaluated dimensions such as hedonism, novelty, local culture, renewal, meaning, participation and knowledge, all of them as predictors of the behavioral intention to recommend or revisit a destination.

Until now, the scales for measuring ETM focused on the psychological characteristics of the tourist experience, as shown by the studies of (Kim, Brent Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012), (Kim & Ritchie, 2014), (Aroeira, Dantas, & De Sevilha Gosling, 2016), and (Tsai, 2016).



Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) are a phenomenon that encompasses psychological, cultural, environmental, and relational aspects. Its importance lies in both its individual and collective impact. Dimensions such as affect, novelty, cultural significance, knowledge, and participation are key to developing effective tourism strategies. Furthermore, models are being developed to evaluate and improve these experiences, ensuring they meet travelers' expectations and foster destination values. However, researchers have not reached a consensus on which factors make some experiences more memorable than others. MTE also contributes to tourist satisfaction and promotes local identity and tourism sustainability.

Destination Image

This concept consists of a cognitive image, which includes rational benefits and characteristics of the destination, as well as an affective image, which reflects tourists' feelings about the place and their pleasant experiences (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018); (Qu, Kim, & Hyunjung, 2011); (Prayag & Ryan, 2011). In addition, this image is enriched by various products, services, attractions and attributes that contribute to the overall impression of the destination and help individuals form an opinion about it (Whang, Yong, & Ko, 2016). Thus, destination attributes can be both tangible (monuments, beaches and mountains) and intangible (culture, customs and history) (Kim J. H., 2014); (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). In this way, the same destination can evoke different images for different types of potential consumers, and each individual can carry out a different selection process based on the information they obtain about the destination (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018); (Whang, Yong, & Ko, 2016).

The perceived image of a destination is an important factor in consumers' future behavioral intention, impacting travel behavior in three distinct phases: before, during, and after the visit (Lee & Bai, 2016).

Tourists' perceptions of a destination influence both their choice and their future satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2008). The more complete and accurate the information tourists have about a destination, the closer the correspondence between their image of the destination and reality.

Thus, the image a tourist has before visiting a destination becomes a determining factor in the decision-making process (Buhalis, 2000), in the *on-site experience*, and in the post-



visit evaluation , as well as in future behavioral intentions (Foroudi, y otros, 2018). According to (Azeglio & Gandara, 2010) this, individual image perception consists of three stages:

- *A priori* perception : the mental construction that an individual makes of a place without physical connection to it.
- *In situ* perception : balance of previous images and reading of reality.
- *A posteriori* perception : the reinterpretation of lived experience, once back in the place of origin.

On the other hand, projected images are a construct that simplifies, selects, and distorts reality in most cases; this is because a communicator is responsible for creating said image, where attributes, values, impressions, words, or visions compose the image of the destination.(Azeglio & Gandara, 2010)

In conclusion, destination image is vital to the tourist experience and affects every stage of the trip, from the initial decision to the final evaluation. This concept encompasses both cognitive and emotional aspects and needs to be properly managed so that tourists' expectations align with reality. A strong, positive image helps destinations stand out, attract visitors, and create memorable experiences. It also fosters an emotional connection that favors visitor loyalty to the magical town of Cholula. Destination image is divided into perceived image and projected image.

Intention to Return

Return intention, understood as the willingness to visit a destination again (Baker & Crompton, 2000); (Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019), is closely related to customer satisfaction, a key factor in fostering loyalty in any sector, including tourism (Som & Badarneh, 2011), since satisfaction increases the likelihood of repeating a visit (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006); ; (Assaker & Hallak, 2013); (Chen & Chen, 2010). (Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019) Returning tourists are more valuable due to their longer length of stay, spending, satisfaction and likelihood of recommending the destination (Lehto & Morrison, 2004); (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018).

The literature agrees that repeat visitors not only tend to extend their stay at tourist destinations, but also engage more diligently in consumption activities, experience higher levels of satisfaction, and promote the destination through positive recommendations.



Furthermore, such visitors entail a considerable reduction in marketing costs compared to first-time visitors (Lehto & Morrison, 2004).(Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018)

The intention to return to a tourist destination is linked to tourist satisfaction, which affects loyalty and recommendation of the destination. Frequent visitors generate more value for their stay and spending. Quality of service and memorable experiences are key to return visits. Negative experiences reduce the likelihood of return, so high standards of tourism quality must be maintained. Strategies should focus on improving the visitor experience to encourage loyalty and return visits.

Magical Town of Cholula

According to the government website of the Magical Towns Program (Mexico desconocido, 2022), San Andrés and San Pedro are considered together the magical town of Cholula, so for the purposes of this study, cultural tourist attractions are taken into account. Cholula is famous for uniting the living history of a pre-Hispanic community with the architectural and cultural richness of viceregal buildings. The representative emblem of this Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town) is the Church of Los Remedios, which rises above the landscape from the top of the pre-Hispanic Great Pyramid. An example of its religious architectural richness is the impressive Temple of San Francisco Acatepec, which features an incredible façade made with Talavera tiles. In this Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town), a short distance away, the symbols of two cultures coexist: the Great Pyramid and the former Franciscan convent of San Gabriel, one of the oldest convents in the Americas. Another of the destination's main attractions is the Regional Museum of Cholula, where its cultural and historical richness can be appreciated through its eight rooms. This museum houses a true treasure, the Lienzo *Quauhquechollan* , considered by the United Nations Educational , Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site and part of the Regional Register of the Memory of the World Program. Several of these and other attractions can be found in Table 1.



Table 1. Cultural Tourist Attractions of the Magical Town of Cholula .

Cultural Attraction	Foundation	Description
Royal Chapel.	1540.	Built to evangelize indigenous people, its architecture inspired by Arab mosques stands out for its 49 domes.
Parish of San Andrés Cholula.	1557 to 1670.	A grey quarry parish church with a three-story façade adorned with carved flowers; inside it houses the Chapel of Solitude.
Former convent of San Gabriel.	1552.	Among the oldest temples in Mexico, built in neoclassical style over the temple of Quetzalcoatl by indigenous people led by Fray Toribio de Alcaraz.
Parish of San Pedro.	17th – 18th centuries.	It stands out for its tallest tower in Cholula and its Churrigueresque architecture, visible in its dome and interior decorations.
Great Pyramid of Cholula Archaeological Zone.	It began in the 2nd century BC and ended between 900 and 1100 AD.	The Pyramid of Cholula, with 400 m per side and 66 m high, is the largest in the world at its base, thanks to the superposition of several pyramids.
San Francisco Acatepec Temple.	Built around the 18th century and completed in 1730.	Temple with a baroque façade and bell towers decorated with Puebla Talavera, characterized by its colorful ceramic pieces.
Church of Santa María Tonantzintla.	16th-18th century.	On the hill where the temple stands today, there once stood a shrine to Tonantzin. The Spanish adopted the name and linked it to the Virgin Mary, creating a jewel of Mexican Baroque.
Place de la Concorde Los Portales .	Built in 1573.	The Plaza de la Concordia, with 46 arches spanning 170 meters, is the



		longest of its kind in Mexico and a cultural attraction in Cholula for its architecture, cuisine, and crafts.
Sanctuary to Our Lady of Remedies.	Built between 1594 and 1864.	At the top of the Great Pyramid of Cholula, the parish of Our Lady of Remedies stands out for its neoclassical architecture and baroque paintings inside.

Source: Prepared by the authors with information from (Mexico desconocido, 2022)the Cultural Information System (SECTUR, 2016).

Cholula's designation as a Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town) in 2012 is based on the convergence of multiple attributes that distinguish it as an exceptional destination. Its ancient history, dating back to 500 BC, makes it one of the oldest continuously occupied cities in the Americas, demonstrating the significance of its pre-Hispanic legacy. This fact alone constitutes a major tourist attraction for researchers and visitors eager to explore the vestiges of ancient civilizations. Furthermore, its role in Mexican history is fundamental, having been the scene of the Cholula Massacre in 1519, a tragic episode that marked a turning point in the Conquest of Mexico. This historic event, although mournful, is part of the collective memory and intangible heritage of the nation, which adds intrinsic historical and cultural value to the destination (Secretaría de Turismo, 2019).

Additionally, Cholula's cultural identity is evident in its prolific artisanal production, which encompasses diverse disciplines such as Talavera, Popotillo, pottery, fireworks, and cider making. These artistic expressions, passed down from generation to generation, not only preserve ancestral techniques but also enrich the tourist experience by offering visitors the opportunity to purchase unique and representative products of the region. Finally, its vast religious heritage, comprised of a huge number of churches and temples that, according to local tradition, are equated with the days of the year, reinforces its character as a tourist and spiritual destination. This unique characteristic, which fuses faith and art, attracts pilgrims and visitors interested in exploring the architectural and symbolic richness of its religious sites (López Levi, Valverde Valverde | , Fernández Poncela, & Figueroa Díaz, 2015).

The Pyramid of Cholula, the largest in area in the world, is a testament to its past and a top-notch tourist attraction. Furthermore, the city boasts numerous convents, churches, and



viceregal homes that reflect its architectural and religious richness. Local traditions and festivals keep Cholula's essence alive and enrich its cultural offerings.(Martínez, 2005)

Cholula offers a wide range of tourist services to meet the needs of visitors. Hotels of various categories, restaurants offering local and international cuisine, craft shops, and travel agencies are some of the available options. Furthermore, the city boasts an excellent location, making it easy to access from Mexico City and other nearby towns.(Cuerpo editorial de la Agroteca, 2023)

The warmth and hospitality of the town's residents are nationally recognized, contributing to a welcoming and authentic atmosphere for visitors. The local community actively participates in the preservation of Cholula's cultural and natural heritage, organizing events and activities that promote sustainable tourism. The Pueblo Mágico Cholula registers an annual influx of 353,235 tourists, of which 80%, equivalent to 282,588, are national and 70,647 are of foreign origin.

Method

For this study, a quantitative and correlational research was designed, according to Hernandez (2006), This type of design focuses on identifying and analyzing relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. Statistical techniques such as Pearson's correlation coefficient are used to determine whether there is a correlation between variables, as well as the strength and direction of that correlation. Stata and Excel *software are used for this purpose.*

The main objective of this study is to determine the degree of association between the independent variables: 1) destination image and 2) memorable tourist experience versus the dependent variable "return intention." Two causal hypotheses are formulated as follows: H1: Destination image has a direct and positive relationship with return intention among tourists who have visited Cholula; H2: Memorable tourist experience has a direct and positive relationship with return intention among tourists who have visited Cholula.

Furthermore, it is accompanied by a descriptive sociodemographic study that explains the main characteristics of the tourist attractions of the magical town of Cholula and determines the profile of national tourists who visit it, thus complementing the information from the quantitative research.



The research focuses spatially on the Cholula region, which includes the municipalities of San Andrés and San Pedro, in the state of Puebla. Regarding temporal delimitation, data collection through surveys took place during the Day of the Dead festivities, the Vaniloquio International Festival, the Sendero al Mictlán Festival, the Desfiles de las Almas Cholultecas, the Patron Saint Festival of Saint Andrew, the December holidays, and the end-of-year celebrations. These dates were selected due to the high influx of tourists attracted by Cholula's status as a Magical Town and its rich cultural traditions.

Regarding the type of research techniques, a survey and person-to-person interview were used. These questions were conducted using a questionnaire with 16 Likert-scale questions, distributed as follows: 5 on destination image, 7 on Memorable Tourist Experiences, and 4 on return intention. The instrument was administered from October 25 to December 29, 2024, as these are peak season dates when domestic tourists flock to this destination for the aforementioned festivities.

Five scholarship students from the Faculty of Management of the Bachelor's Program in Tourism Management and International Business at BUAP were trained. The surveys were conducted primarily in the archaeological site of the Cholula pyramid, the parish of San Pedro Cholula, the Convent of San Miguel Arcángel, the main square, and major cultural attractions such as churches and historic buildings adjacent to the city center.

The study unit is considered to be both Cholulas (San Pedro and San Andrés), with the subjects being national tourists who are visiting for the first time or who are frequent visitors to the Magical Town of Cholula.

For the theoretical framework, the following methods will be used: deductive, analytical and synthetic, which will help conceptualize the theory necessary to be able to operationalize the variables and be able to contribute to the research a new hybrid model that allows correlating the variables for this study.

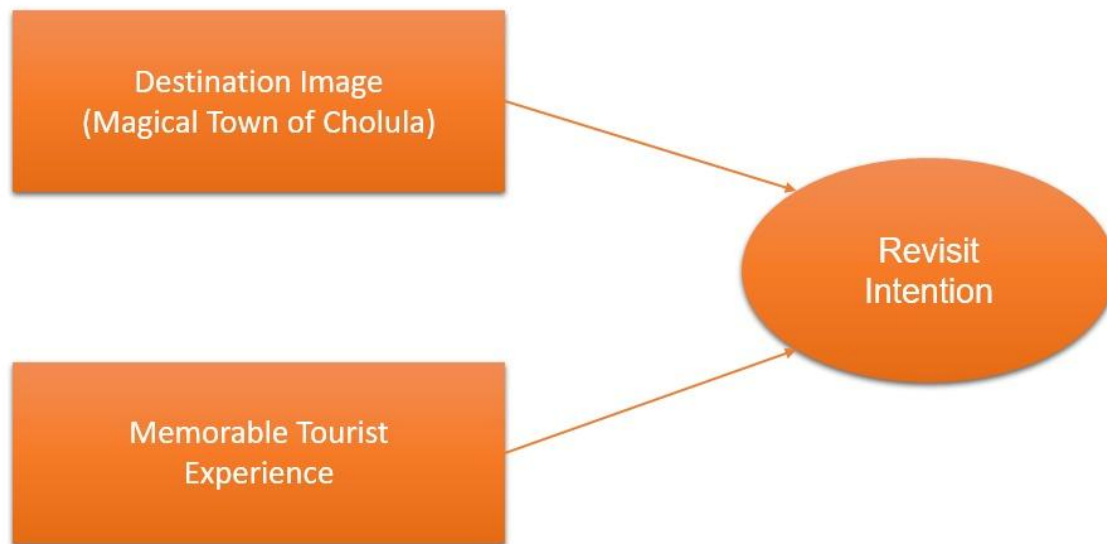
Conceptual model of Tourist Perception of a Magical Town

The proposed conceptual model (Figure 1) conceives the image of a tourist destination as a mental construct formed from perceptions of both the external and internal attributes of the place. These perceptions, according to Gutman's (1982) means-end chain theory, directly influence the cognitive and affective benefits that tourists experience, giving rise to Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs) such as hedonism and knowledge



acquisition. These experiences, in turn, significantly impact tourists' intention to revisit the destination. The proposed model aligns with Gutman's postulates by articulating a value chain that links attributes, consequences, and values, thus allowing us to understand tourists' decision-making processes.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Tourist Perception of the Pueblo Mágico: Cholula



Variables independientes.

Variable dependiente.

Note: Authors' own elaboration based on data from (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018).

The instrument consists of three sections: Destination Image Perception, with ten indicators; Tourist Perception, with ten indicators; and Return Intention, with seven indicators. Each section is on a Likert scale.

Measurement of constructs and translation of the questionnaire

This study needs to measure the following three constructs:

- a) Image of the destination,
- b) EMT (memorable tourist experiences) and
- c) Intention to return

Destination image is measured according to the conceptualization of Zhang *et al.* (2018)(i.e., core elements of the destination product, including attractions and infrastructure). Five items were used for this concept, which were taken from the literature and include cultural authenticity, feelings, expectations, value for money, and authenticity of attractions (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018).

The measurement of EMT uses Kim's seven-item, seven-indicator scale, namely: experienced emotions, satisfaction, closeness to traditions and values, exploration, reminiscence, destination experience, and level of interaction with the locality (Kim, Brent Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Destination image is conceptualized as a second-order formative construct with dimensions reflected at the first level. EMT is conceptualized as a second-order reflective construct with dimensions reflected at the first level.

Return intention is measured with four items, including cultural, historical, and archaeological heritage; spiritual connection; traditions; and gastronomic authenticity (Jang, 2007). (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018)All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to rate the items from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire developed by, which contains 64 items, was used (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018)to obtain their work.

An instrument was developed to analyze how different components of destination image and memorable tourist experiences influence the return intention of domestic tourists.

Table 2 presents a summary of the methodological procedures used in this research. It details the data collection and analysis strategies, as well as the methodological approach guiding the study.

Table 2. Technical summary of the research

Investigation.	Quantitative Approach, research: Descriptive and correlational.
Unit of analysis.	The sample consisted of 394 respondents, with the following age groups: 49% were between 20 and 30 years old; 22.3% were between 31 and 40 years old ; 16.5% were between 41 and 50 years old; 9.4% were between 51 and 60 years old; and 2.8% were over 60 years old. 54.1% were female and 45.9% were male. Of these, 58.4% were single; 27.7% were married; 10.2% were divorced; and 3.8% were widowed. Regarding their origin, 24.6% lived in Mexico City; 20.8% lived in the state of Veracruz; 18.3% lived in the state of Mexico; 10.7% lived in the state of Morelos; and 25.6% reported other origins.
Method.	Deductive, analytical and synthetic.
Technique.	In-person, face-to-face, non-probabilistic survey.
Instrument.	A questionnaire with 16 items was used and the Likert-type scale was used with the following options: () Strongly agree, () Agree, () Neutral, () Disagree, () Strongly disagree. (target image: from items 1 to 5, etm : from items 6 to 12, return intention: from items 13 to 16).
<i>Cronbrach 's alpha .</i>	A high result was obtained indicating that the test items are and measure the same construct, with a result of 0.95, the applied instrument presents a relationship and excellent internal reliability.
The implementation strategy .	To whom?: Tourists who visited Cholula, Puebla. Where?: Magical Town of Cholula, Puebla. When?: October 25 to December 29, 2024.
Sample.	The magical town of Cholula recorded an annual influx of 353,235 tourists in 2024, of which 80% (282,588) were



	nationals and 20% (70,647) were foreigners. For this study, October 2024 was selected as the sample period, with an influx of 29,437 visitors, of which 80% (23,550) were nationals. The sample, n=394 subjects, was justified by a statistically representative size, calculated to guarantee the validity of the results in the context of the analyzed tourist population n=394 subjects.
Target population.	A total of 394 tourists visited Cholula, Puebla, between October and December. The tourist market segment comprised men and women between the ages of 20 and 65, with socioeconomic levels ranging from D+ to C+, primarily from the State of Mexico, Mexico City, Morelos, and Veracruz.
Period of application of the instrument.	October 25 to December 29, using a face-to-face survey.
Tests and techniques used in data analysis.	The parametric statistical tests used are: Pearson's correlation coefficient, Coefficient of determination and <i>Alpha coefficient of Cronbach's</i> . In addition, the linear regression analysis method was used.
Statistical program used.	Stata and Excel.

Source: Own elaboration

Definition of variables

Studying the return intention of domestic tourists to Cholula, a magical town, is of great importance for understanding their behavior. Factors such as previous experience, perceived quality, and value obtained influence this intention, which is framed within loyalty and satisfaction models. The destination's image and the creation of memorable experiences are crucial for strengthening return intention. This analysis allows for the design of marketing strategies that consolidate Cholula as a first-class tourist destination, promoting its sustainable development.



Results

Table 3 presents the objectives (O1 and O2), as well as the hypotheses (H1 and H2), the results, and their interpretation. The analytical development is presented as follows: a) Table 4 shows the correlation matrix between the variables destination image and return intention; b) Table 5 shows the correlation matrix between Memorable Tourist Experiences and return intention; c) Table 6 shows the regression analysis between the variables destination image and return intention; and d) Table 7 shows the regression analysis between the variables memorable tourist experience and return intention.

Table 3. Objectives, hypotheses, solutions and interpretation.

Objectives and hypotheses	Solutions	Interpretation
<p>O1: Determine the relationship between destination image and return intention of tourists who visited Cholula.</p> <p>H1: The image of the destination has a positive and direct relationship with the return intention of tourists who have visited Cholula.</p>	<p>Pearson coefficient is equal to 0.742674</p> <p>Coefficient of determination is equal to 0.5515.</p> <p>The equation that relates the variables is: $Image = (0.7034 * Return Intention) + 1.8293$</p>	<p>The image of the destination explains 55.15% of the return intention.</p> <p>The correlation between the variables is moderate and positive, allowing us to accept hypothesis H1, thus demonstrating a causal relationship in which the destination image directly and positively influences the return intention of tourists visiting Cholula.</p>
<p>O2: Determine the relationship between memorable tourist experience and return intention of tourists who visited Cholula.</p> <p>H2: Memorable tourist experience has a positive and direct relationship with</p>	<p>Pearson coefficient is equal to 0.7563.</p> <p>Coefficient of determination is equal to 0.5720.</p> <p>The equation that relates the variables is: $Memorable Tourist Experience = T (0.465 *$</p>	<p>Memorable tourist experiences account for 57.20% of return intentions.</p> <p>The correlation between the variables is moderately positive, which validates hypothesis H2, demonstrating a causal relationship in which a memorable tourist experience directly and</p>



the intention to return in tourists who have visited Cholula.	<i>Return Intention</i>) +3.2048.	positively influences the return intention of tourists visiting Cholula.
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Source: Prepared by the authors based on the methodology used.

Table 4: Correlation matrix between the variables destination image and return intention

Variables	Intention to return
Image of destiny.	0.7426 ****

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the methodology used.

Table 4 shows the interrelationship between the variables destination image and return intention, with destination image being the independent variable and return intention being the dependent variable. According to Table 3, the correlation between these variables is high and positive. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is supported, indicating a strong direct association.

Table 5 . Correlation matrix between the variables memorable tourist experience and return intention

Variables	Intention to return
Memorable tourist experience.	0.7563 ****

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the methodology used.

Table 5 presents the interrelationship between the variables memorable tourist experience and return intention, where memorable tourist experience acts as the independent variable and return intention as the dependent variable. According to Table 3, the correlation between the two variables is high and positive. Consequently, hypothesis H2 is supported, indicating a strong and direct association.

Table 6. Linear regressions of the dimensions of the variables destination image and return intention

Variables	Dependent Variable: Return Intention
Independent Variable: Image of the Destination.	Return Intention Based on the Destination Image.
Value of the constant or intercept.	1.8293
Value of the coefficient of the variable.	0.7034
<i>Statistic T.</i>	21.96 **
Level of significance.	0.5515
Adjusted coefficient of determination.	0.5504
F-statistic.	482.04**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the methodology used.

Note. Table 6 presents the regression results for the equation $\text{Destination Image} = (0.7034 \times \text{Return Intention}) + 1.8293$. In this case, Return Intention is the dependent variable and Destination Image is the independent variable. The rows detail: the name of the independent variable, the value of the constant or intercept, the value of the coefficient of the variable along with its t-statistic and the significance level at 5% (**), the coefficient of determination, the adjusted coefficient of determination, the F-statistic and its significance level at 5% (**)

Regression analysis showed a linear relationship between Return Intention and Destination Image. A linear regression equation was generated to predict Return Intention based on Destination Image. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) calculated the F-statistic and the coefficient of determination, demonstrating that Destination Image explained 55.15% of the variation in Return Intention, with a significance level of 5%.

Table 7. Linear regressions of the dimensions of the variables memorable tourist experience and return intention

Variables	Dependent Variable: Return Intention
Independent Variable: Memorable Tourist Experience.	Return Intention Based on Memorable Tourist Experience.
Value of the constant or intercept.	3.2048
Value of the coefficient of the variable.	0.465
Statistic t	22.89**
Level of significance.	0.5720
Adjusted coefficient of determination	0.5709
F -statistic.l	523.95**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the methodology used.

Note. Table 7 shows the regression results for the equation $\text{Memorable Tourist Experience} = (0.465 \times \text{Return Intention}) + 3.2048$. In this case, Return Intention is the dependent variable and Memorable Tourist Experience is the independent variable. The lines indicate: the name of the independent variable, the value of the constant or intercept, the value of the variable's coefficient with its t-statistic and the 5% significance level (**), the coefficient of determination, the adjusted coefficient of determination, the F-statistic and its 5% significance level (**).

A linear regression equation was estimated to predict return intention based on the Return Intention based on the Memorable Tourist Experience scores. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) calculated the F statistic and the coefficient of determination, demonstrating that the Memorable Tourist Experience explained 57.2% of the variation in Return Intention, with a significance level of 5%.

Discussion

The results obtained, combined with the applied methodology, answer the research questions regarding the relationship between destination image and memorable tourist experiences in relation to return intention in the case of the Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town) of Cholula, Puebla. The evidence supports hypotheses H1 and H2, confirming that return



intention maintains a direct and positive relationship with destination image and memorable tourist experiences, exhibiting a high level of association. It was found that destination image and memorable tourist experiences directly influence return intention, confirming a causal relationship.

following statements raised in the literature review can be corroborated :

- a. Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) relate to visitors' memories, especially the emotions and feelings experienced during a tourism activity. This not only acts as a catalyst for tourist satisfaction and loyalty, but also promotes the strengthening of local identity and tourism sustainability (Lee, Yi-Ju, 2015).
- b. ETMs tend to primarily highlight positive experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), these studies highlight that ETMs not only strengthen visitors' positive memories, but also influence the intention to recommend or return to a tourist destination.
- c. The perceived image of a destination is an important factor in consumers' future behavioral intention, impacting travel behavior after the visit (Lee & Bai, 2016).
- d. Consistency between the image perceived by tourists and the reality of the destination is key to their satisfaction and loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007).
- e. Tourists' perceptions of a destination influence both their choice and the level of satisfaction they will experience in the future (Chi & Qu, 2008).
- f. Return intention is closely related to customer satisfaction, a key factor in fostering loyalty in any sector, including tourism (Som & Badarneh, 2011).
- g. tourists not only tend to extend their stay at tourist destinations, but also engage more diligently in consumption activities, experience higher levels of satisfaction, and promote the destination through positive recommendations (Lehto & Morrison, 2004; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018) .
- h. The relationship between tourist satisfaction (satisfaction with their image of the destination and a memorable tourist experience) and willingness to return has been established as a fundamental link in research on consumer behavior, supported by previous studies such as those of Cole & Crompton (2003).

The results, aligned with the literature review, confirm that destination image and memorable tourism experiences (MTE) significantly influence tourists' return intentions, particularly in destinations such as Magical Towns, specifically Cholula, Puebla.



Conclusions

The study objective was achieved thanks to the treatment applied, which yielded evidence supporting the hypotheses with a high level of statistical association between destination image and memorable tourist experience with respect to tourists' return intention.

Based on the results obtained and contrasted with the bibliographic analysis, the following aspects are validated: a) Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) not only act as a catalyst for tourist satisfaction and loyalty, but also promote the strengthening of local identity and tourism sustainability; b) MTE influence the intention to recommend or return to a tourist destination; c) The perceived image of a destination is an important factor in tourists' future behavioral intention; d) The alignment between the image prior to the visit and the reality they find upon arrival at the destination is key to their satisfaction and possible loyalty; e) Tourists' perception of a destination influences both their choice and the level of satisfaction they will experience in the future; f) The intention to return is closely related to customer satisfaction; g) Returning tourists participate more diligently in consumption activities, experience higher levels of satisfaction, and promote the destination through positive recommendations; h) Tourist satisfaction, based on a favorable image of the destination and a memorable tourist experience, is directly linked to their willingness to return, and is a key aspect in research on tourist consumer behavior.

A causal relationship was established between the variables studied, confirming that an appropriate destination image and the creation of memorable tourist experiences influence tourists' return intentions. Statistical analysis provided empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that a positive perception of the destination and memorable experiences are determining factors in tourists' decision to return to the Magical Town of Cholula.

Finally, we propose expanding this research by exploring new lines of study. We recommend using new and different samples and in both geographical areas to enrich the comparison. This comparative approach will allow us to deepen our understanding of tourism activity and develop innovative strategies for positioning these destinations, especially in the domestic tourist market.



Future Lines of Research

Based on the findings of this study exploring the interplay among destination image, memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), and revisit intentions in the Pueblo Mágico of Cholula, Puebla, the following research avenues are proposed:

1. **Comparative Studies Across Destinations for Generalizing Findings:** Comparative research is recommended to examine the dynamics of destination image and MTEs in other Pueblos Mágicos or urban heritage sites with characteristics similar to Cholula. This approach would identify universal patterns and context-specific factors influencing revisit intentions, thereby enhancing understanding of tourism competitiveness across diverse destinations. Replicating the study in varied geographic and cultural contexts would support the generalization of findings and validation of theoretical models.
2. **Analysis of Moderating and Mediating Variables in Tourist Behavior:** Further investigation into the role of moderating variables—such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and tourist origin—and mediating variables, such as experiential satisfaction or emotional attachment, is proposed. The aim is to elucidate how these variables shape or mediate the relationships among destination image, MTEs, and revisit intentions. Incorporating these constructs would enhance the explanatory and predictive power of tourist behavior models.
3. **Influence of Digitalization and Social Media on Destination Image Formation:** Given the rise of global hyperconnectivity, it is critical to explore how digital platforms and social media shape the perceived image of destinations like Cholula. Specifically, their impact on generating MTEs and fostering revisit intentions should be investigated. This research avenue could employ advanced methodologies, such as big data analytics, text mining, and natural language processing, to analyze large volumes of user-generated content in digital environments.

These research avenues, grounded in a robust theoretical and methodological framework, aim to deepen understanding of the determinants of destination selection and tourist loyalty. They seek to generate actionable insights for designing public policies and management strategies that promote the cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability of heritage destinations like Cholula. In doing so, they aspire to make significant contributions to academic discourse and professional practice in cultural and urban tourism.



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